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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: HONDURAS; 01/28/10; BUENOS AIRES

SUMMARY

¶1. Local media distinguished between U.S. support for elected President Lobo and the absence of most Latin American countries from his swearing-in ceremony. Newspapers were divided on the U.S. role in the Honduran crisis. Some media blame the U.S. for helping validate the June 28 coup d'etat through acknowledging the outcome of the November election, while others praise the U.S. "pragmatism" in acknowledging the new president's legitimacy. One pro-government paper highlighted President Obama's delay in cancelling the visas of "coup mongers." End summary.

LOBO OBTAINS FULL U.S., BUT
LITTLE LATIN AMERICAN, SUPPORT

¶2. Some local dailies underscored that elected President Lobo received total support from the U.S., which sent Assistant Secretary Arturo Valenzuela to attend his inauguration ceremony, while only two Latin American countries sent their representatives. Leading circulation Clarin says Lobo took over as Honduran President with the "U.S. congratulations under his arm," but with only two Latin American presidents and a few foreign delegations present.

¶3. An opinion piece in pro-government, left-of-center Pagina 12 notes that during the November election only four countries supported Lobo, one of which was the U.S., while two months later Lobo obtained the acknowledgement of two of his neighboring countries (Guatemala and El Salvador). The paper underscores that Mercosur and ALBA countries will not recognize Lobo. The article adds that Lobo also obtained the support of OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza, who made public calls in favor of the reinstatement of Honduras into the OAS.

¶4. Another Pagina 12 article says that Lobo's policies are expected to continue those of the military dictatorship, that "he will impose neo-liberal measures, reduce public expenditure and pass a law to protect Foreign Investment." The paper quotes former Honduran President Manuel Zelaya citing A/S Valenzuela's remarks that elections are not enough to restore democracy and that a lot more is necessary.

15. Business-financial Ambito Financiero reported that Lobo took over as the new Honduran president with "total support of the U.S. although not from most Latin American countries."

"ELECTIONS VALIDATE A COUP"

SOME BLAME U.S. FOR VALIDATING THE COUP

WHILE OTHERS PRAISE U.S. PRAGMATISM

16. Pro-government Buenos Aires Economico (BAE) subheadline reads, "Lobo's inauguration appears to "consolidate and legitimize the coup." An opinion piece in centrist Critica de la Argentina says the coup is the outcome of U.S. contradictions, and that Zelaya's downfall was planned by Republicans and the Bush supporters who are infiltrated into the Pentagon and the CIA.

17. Under the headline "Elections validated a coup d'etat," Clarin signals that the June coup unveils the flagrant weakness of regional democracies. The paper claims that the coup took place

because the U.S. conservative right wing encouraged it and validated it afterwards. Finally, the article concludes that President Obama is one of those who should be held liable for the Honduran disaster.

18. On the positive side, an opinion article in Critica de la Argentina praised the White House's pragmatism in acknowledging the new president's legitimacy, noting that the final outcome of the political crisis is a defeat for Chavez's interventionism and expansionism.

HUMAN RIGHTS NGOS DENOUNCE

OBAMA'S LACK OF LEADERSHIP

19. Pro-government, left-of-center Pagina 12 newspaper quoted the head of Human Rights Watch's Americas Division as saying that Obama did not play an immediate leading role in the Honduran crisis, that it took him two months to cancel the "coup mongers' visas," and that the cancellation of visas was an efficient tool because the Honduran elite has close ties with Miami. The paper mentions that the head of Human Rights Watch's Americas Division also highlighted that Obama should have imposed immediate unilateral sanctions on coup mongers but, instead, he bet on political and diplomatic pressure. The article says Human Rights and Amnesty International blasted the human rights violations that have been committed since the June coup d'etat. Regarding the amnesty approved by the Honduran Congress overnight, the paper notes that although the amnesty does not include the reduction or exemption of penalties for those held liable for the human rights violations committed, in practice this does not mean that an investigation will be performed to find out exactly what happened.

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